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MARY KAY HARRIS IS CHOREOGRAPHER
FOR 'THE BACCHAE' PERFORMANCES AT UM

By Charles Starzynski
UM Department of Drama

MISSOULA--

According to Webster, dance is a rhythmic and patterned movement of the body, usually to musical accompaniment. According to Mary Kay Harris, choreographer and former teacher, dance is a much more elevated and complex expression of the human spirit than this standardized definition implies.

Presently, Ms. Harris is choreographing the University of Montana Department of Drama's modern interpretive production of the ancient Greek classic, "The Bacchae."

Born in San Francisco and most recently of New York, her last professional engagement was as an actress with the Circle in the Square Theater in New York. Prior to that, she engaged in several activities around the country, among which are several seasons of Summer Stock in New York and Massachusetts, work with the Ensemble Studio, the Hall House and the Second City theaters in Chicago, the Monomoy in Cape Cod and a year with the American Conservatory Theater (ACT) in San Francisco, where her interest and knowledge of West African ritual dance was fostered.

Immediately after leaving the ACT, Ms. Harris began studying Haitian dance in New York with Emy desa Pradines. Since then she has concentrated on studying and teaching primitive ritual dance, though not to the complete exclusion of classical ballet and jazz, which she has studied and taught for several years in numerous metropolitan areas.

MARY KAY HARRIS IS CHOREOGRAPHER--page 2

It is this delicate intertwining of the separate worlds of dance which Ms. Harris wields so deftly to perform her own sort of magic on the University Theater stage. Ms. Harris said that the dances being used in "The Bacchae" are derived directly from authentic West African and Haitian ritual dances. She forms and molds her dancers with the precision of a fine sculptor and surrounds them with an aura of mystery and ritual as only the dance of primitive culture can create.

It is this aura, this mood, which, fused with the ritual presentation of "The Bacchae," will present a theatrical experience rarely before experienced in this community. "The Bacchae" opens on Thursday, Nov. 21, and runs through Sunday, Nov. 24, in the University Theater. Curtain time is 8 p.m. and reservations are available by calling 243-4581.

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